

CARES Plus-Round 2 Q and A - Week of April 15, 2013

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

1. With regard to the requirement that MTP participants receive a stipend of \$400-\$800, how do you suggest we manage the stipend determination and processing?
 - A. *Some local programs inform participants that the stipend amount will be within a dollar range, explaining that determination of the exact amount of the stipend occurs once the Lead Agency is able to verify the number of participants who register and are accepted into that Component. Other Lead Agencies wait to set the exact stipend until they know how many participants successfully complete the requirements. These arrangements allow the Lead Agency to budget a particular amount.*
2. We have had great success without the higher stipends; can we do/say anything that would waive the requirement so we can align the MTP stipends with our countywide incentive structure (AB212, QRIS)?
 - A. *The RFA is a legal document and this requirement cannot be waived. However, alignment with AB212 and the QRIS is highly recommended. Please call a member of the CARES Plus Team so we can offer possible strategies for alignment.*
3. Upon review of the form "Facility Director/Owner Authorization for Staff to Participate in CARES Plus Program Evaluation Activities," I noticed that it has not been updated to include the possibility of a live vs. videotaped observation.
 - A. *This form will be updated and reposted. Please see RFA Form LA.1 The in-person or videotape language is included on this form. Thank you for calling this to our attention.*
4. When will the participant forms be approved? If we use the forms as is, do you think we will have an issue later on and have to re-collect?
 - A. *The forms provided with the RFA were samples of the forms that will be used. Final versions are being edited at this time and many participant forms are being translated. Once approved, they will be posted on the CARES Plus-Round 2 implementation page. Participant forms related to the evaluation protocol will be posted online once approved by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. These forms are the "Limitation of Data Sharing," "Non-Medical Bill of Rights" and the "Notice of Observation in the Classroom." These forms will be available in English and Spanish.*

5. Is the “Participant Bill of Rights” a form we provide in the application, but one not needing a signature?
 - A. *Yes, the “Non-Medical Bill of Rights” is a form provided to participants and does not require a signature from the participant.*
6. The RFA states that a Lead Agency must enroll 80% of all local participants by September 15th of each program year and the remaining 20% by December 31st. Will there be any flexibility on this rule?
 - A. *The 80 /20 rule was established to ensure fair representation of all counties in the CLASS observation selection process. First 5 California highly recommends Lead Agencies adhere to this rule. However, the rule is meant to ensure fair representation, and is not meant to decrease the number of potential providers served by this program. If you have additional questions about the impact of this requirement on your county’s recruitment plan, please call a member of the CARES Plus Team so we can offer possible strategies to meet the desired outcomes of both First 5 California and your Lead Agency.*
7. When is the local E & A Plan due to First 5 California?
 - A. *The first E & A Plan is due at the time of application, May 10, 2013. The development of the E & A plan is incorporated into the RFA application form. Annual E & A Plans will be updated as part of the QPR each year.*
8. Do participants need to complete CORE requirements in Round 2 if they successfully completed them in Round 1? We realize this would not apply to infant teachers who would need to complete Intro to CLASS/LAC for Infants when it becomes available.
 - A. *If a participant continuously participates in Round 1 and Round 2, the CORE requirements only need to be completed once.*
9. The CARES Plus application (R.5) does not ask for a “Total number of participants budgeted for” or “Stipend Amount” for the Master’s degree. We currently serve participants in the Master’s degree program in CD/ECE. Can we still write and request funding toward the Master degree programs/stipends?
 - A. *Yes, participants working toward their Master’s degrees would be participating in Component B, Higher Education.*
10. Do re-enrollees need to complete the “CARES Plus Data Limitation of Data Sharing” form?
 - A. *Yes, it is a required form in Round 2.*

11. Page 5 of Form P.1 lists “Race to the Top” as a type of work facility. Please define what makes a facility “Race to the Top.”
- A. *A Race to the Top (RTT) facility is one participating in quality improvement efforts through the RTT-ELC grant. This applies to the 17 counties receiving California Department of Education funds for the RTT-ELC activities.*
12. How is a “public school” work facility defined? How is it different from “state preschool”?
- A. *“Public school” refers to a program that is administered through a school district; “state preschool” refers to funding that is provided through Child Development Division and may or may not be operated by a school district.*
13. Shouldn’t “Family Child Care Home” be added to the “work facility” section? It would be so much more appropriate than “other” which appears to be the only option.
- A. *“Family Child Care” is part of the response to the question: “Setting or Program Type.” The section you are referring to is about program funding.*
14. It is my understanding that CARES Plus participants must work with children ages 0-5, yet one of the options for “Setting or Program Type” on page 5 of form P.1 reads “License-Exempt Center” or “School-Age Program.” How can this be?
- A. *In an effort to align our applications with other “data collection systems,” such as the CDD Profile, we used the same terminology which allows for the possibility of using shared data. Although a participant working in a school-age program (with school-age children only) would not qualify for CARES Plus, a participant working in a license-exempt center may qualify.*
15. How does an Executive Director or Multi-Site Director qualify to participate in CARES Plus? There is no mention of administrators or professional support staff as reflected on P.1, p. 5 of 9.
- A. *Please refer to Appendix F for the definition of “CARES Plus Participants.” We use the words CARES Plus Participants, early educator, and teacher interchangeably to represent broad categories of terms used to define those who work in Early Care and Education. Participants enrolled in CARES Plus must be directly working with children from ages 0 to 5 years a minimum of 15 hours a week and minimum of 9 months a year in order to qualify.*
16. Is there a way to make Looking At Classrooms™ (LAC™) available to those in migrant or seasonal programs during the summer months when programs are in full swing and participants would most benefit from access to LAC™ and the video library?

- A. *Currently, this is not in the contract with our LAC™ vendor. As we work to make the CARES Plus program accessible to as many early educators as possible, we will look into adding this option in future years.*
17. Does First 5 California define who is eligible for a "longevity" (i.e., returning participant) stipend, if we offer one? For example, are participants who complete CARES Plus this year (last year of Round 1) and re-complete next year (first year of Round 2) eligible for a "longevity" stipend?
- A. *Yes. However, the stipend is a local decision. Each Lead Agency may determine its own definition of "longevity" as part of the stipend structures. With the exception of the required stipend for Component D, Lead Agencies may set their own rules and definitions for what meets their local requirements.*

FISCAL

1. If all of the required cash match is provided by the local First 5, how do we complete the top of the cash match form?
- A. *Enter the name of your First 5 county commission.*
2. We are working on the application and budget for CARES Plus - Round 2. We would like to confirm that the budget structure currently approved for Round 1 is still permissible for Round 2. Currently, all direct service funds for Round 1 are allocated to the Operational cost line item, including stipends. All participants are paid directly by our subcontracted vendor.
- A. *You are correct in assuming that the budget structure has not changed. Please explain deviations on the budget Narrative Form R.7.*
3. The Operational cost line on Form R.6 would indicate the total amount to be paid to the subcontractor, which would include the stipend dollars. Form R.7 would support this by detailing the stipend breakdown under the operational line (using the format under the Stipend category). Will this be acceptable?
- A. *Yes, it will be acceptable.*
4. If the local First 5 does not receive CARES Plus funding, why would this funding be included in our audit? What authority do we have to audit another agency? This is out of the scope of work for our auditor. Please explain.
- A. *California Health and Safety Code Section 130150(a) requires each county commission to conduct an audit and prepare an annual report of the Proposition 10 funds it has expended and the progress and achievement of its program goals and objectives. In addition, if any county commission receives State Commission funds through a voluntary Local Area Agreement, or as a subcontractor to a local public entity serving as a Lead Agency for a*

State Commission program, then those contracts will include terms and conditions that direct the manner in which the county commission must audit and report the program and expenditure data. The CARES Plus Round 2 RFA requires the Lead Agency to conduct an annual audit of CARES Plus funding due to First 5 California by November 1 of each year. If a county commission receives no CARES Plus funding – whether directly or via a subcontract or local partnership agreement – then there would be no revenue or expenditures for the county commission to audit or report. If the Lead Agency for a county is a local public entity, then that local public entity is responsible for complying with the annual audit requirement. If there is specific language in the RFA or Sample Local Area Agreement that suggests otherwise, please bring it to the attention of Kellie Westley, Chief of Contracts and Procurement, at kwestley@ccfc.ca.gov.

5. To use Race to the Top (RTT) as a county program match for CARES Plus, please clarify the following example: Our annual RTT match is \$500,000, but we only spend \$450,000 in FY 2013-14. How does this affect our CARES Plus budget?
 - A. *First, the Lead Agency must make sure that the terms and conditions of the RTT funding can be used for the match in CARES Plus. If it can be used for the match, any RTT funds not used will remain in your accounts for other allowable uses under the RTT terms and conditions. CARES Plus funding will be provided on a reimbursement basis only. If you do not use all of the money, there will be nothing to do since you are invoicing only for those expenditures that have been incurred.*

Evaluation

1. Are we able to remove choices that we know do not apply in our county? For example, there is no “military base” work facility in our county. However, someone might still select it and skew the data. If it is omitted from our local application, we take steps toward ensuring that the data provided by program participants is accurate.
 - A. *If you are using paper forms, the Lead Agency may create its own application form based on Form P1, pages 4-8, as long as no questions (data elements) or choices (codes) are removed or altered. Lead Agencies may add but not delete information collected with Form P1, pages 4-8. CARES Plus program data are being collected statewide. Therefore, questions (data elements) and choices (codes) must remain uniform across all counties participating in CARES Plus so that data will be consistent for the CARES Plus data system. If particular choices do not apply, for example no “military base” as a work facility in your county, the Lead Agency should check these data before entering them into the data system.*

2. What is the format for providing CARES Plus participant data to meet the August 20 and September 15 deadlines if we are an “upload” county?
 - A. *The required fields for the August 20 and September 15 deadlines are defined in Appendix D in the Initial Enrollment column. A single file with the required participant and program information will be used. The revised file layout will be posted on the website by May 17th.*